

Overview

This lesson teaches the history of the state song, "Home on the Range," through expository text and a timeline. The students will have the opportunity to examine the text of the song for meaning and to determine how the author creates the setting. This lesson is presented in four parts but can be adjusted to meet a variety of schedules.

Standards

History:

Benchmark 3, Indicator 2: The student describes the history of the Kansas state song, "Home on the Range."

Benchmark 4, Indicator 1: The student creates and uses historical timelines.

Reading:

Benchmark 3, Indicator 3: The student uses a dictionary or a glossary to determine an appropriate definition of a word or uses a thesaurus to expand vocabulary.

Literature:

Benchmark 1, Indicator 2: The student identifies and describes the setting (e.g., environment, time of day or year, historical period, situation, place) of the story or literary text.

Objectives

Content:

- The student will identify the setting of the text of "Home on the Range."

Skills:

- The student will be able to look up unfamiliar terms in the dictionary.
- Using a timeline, the students will retell the history of the state song, "Home on the Range."

Essential Questions

- How did "Home on the Range" become the Kansas state song?
- How is the Kansas setting described in poetry and song?



Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- **The History of the State Song**
- **“Home on the Range”**

Day 1

- Activate prior knowledge by asking the students if they know the Kansas state song. If you have a recording of “Home on the Range,” play it for the class and have the students follow along reading from the **“Home on the Range”** *Read Kansas* card.
- Have the students read **The History of the Kansas State Song** *Read Kansas* card. Using the timeline, have the class orally retell the story of the Kansas state song.

Day 2

- Remind the students that the state song was written first as a poem and it may have words in it that are not familiar to them. Explain to the class that they are going to work in groups with each group taking a verse of the poem.
- Make an overhead of the **Understanding “Home on the Range”** graphic organizer for the chorus (the first page of the sequence). Model to the students how to work through the graphic organizer, first determining any words they do not know, then trying to guess the meaning of the unknown words through context clues, and then comparing their speculations with the definition in the dictionary.
- Divide the class into six small groups. Give each group one of the verses to explore using the remaining **Understanding “Home on the Range”** graphic organizer pages. Have each group complete the graphic organizer for its verse. Have each group teach its verse to the class explaining its meaning by defining the difficult words.

Day 3

- “Home on the Range” has a specific setting. Its setting describes a specific environment and sense of place during a specific time period (shortly after Kansas became a state). Working in groups, have the students complete the **Clues to the Setting** chart. Before the groups begin, model the exercise for the students. Make an overhead using the example sheet that lists phrases in the chorus of the song. Each group will be working with the entire poem for this exercise using the **“Home on the Range”** *Read Kansas* card.
- Have each group share with the class at least three phrases from the poem that establish the setting. Write the phrases on one side of the board. Save these for the next day’s activity.

Day 4

- Have the class review the list of phrases on the board. Do these words describe Kansas today? Is it a particular place in Kansas? Does the song describe the setting during a particular time period?
- Ask the students what words they would use today to describe Kansas. Make another list on the board. Compare the two lists.
- Using the **“Home on the Range”** worksheet, have the students draw a picture of a Kansas setting in the past or present using the words on the board to spark their imagination. Have the students write a caption for their drawing that describes the setting. If possible, bind the drawings into a book and donate it to the school library.

Assessment

- Observe the students' ability to orally retell the story of the Kansas state song using the timeline.
- Evaluate the students' participation in the **Understanding Home on the Range** graphic organizer.
- Evaluate the students' participation in the **Clues to the Setting** chart.
- Evaluate the student's ability to draw a Kansas setting and write a caption.

For the Teacher

What is a folksong?

- "Home on the Range" is a folksong.
- Folksongs are made up of melodies and words that are passed on from one generation to the next.
- Folksongs are part of our history, so they have usually been around for a long time. They often tell us about everyday life in the past. Folksongs also can tell us how people felt about a place or event.
- We learn folksongs by memory. This means that there are many versions of the same song. We may all remember a specific song in a different way.
- Sometimes folksongs are changed as they travel to new places. Images that reflect the new location replace old images. This also leads to different versions of a folksong.

What are the definitions of some of the phrases in "Home on the Range?"

Verse #	Language	Meaning
3	"gale of the Solomon vale"	The wind of the Solomon River valley (in Smith County)
3	"where life streams with buoyancy flow"	It was important to the pioneers to have a good source of water. This line refers to running water from a spring.
3	"on the banks of the Beaver"	Dr. Higley lived on the banks of Beaver Creek
4	"the wild curlew's scream"	The sound made by a long-billed curlew, which is a bird that could be found in western Kansas in the summer months
6	"the zephyrs so balmy and light"	The light breezes
6	"I would not exchange my home here to range"	"Range" is used here as a verb, meaning to roam. The original title of the song was <i>Western Home</i> . When the title was changed, "range" became a noun in the title.
6	"Forever in azure so bright"	Bright blue skies

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Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas State Historical Society collections
- Gene Berryman ("Home on the Range" front and back)
- Kansas Geological Survey (The History of the State Song front)

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Chorus	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
A home, a home where the deer and the antelope play,			
Where never is heard a discouraging word			
And the sky is not cloudy all day.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 1	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,			
Where the deer and the antelope play,			
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word			
And the sky is not cloudy all day.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 2	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
Oh, give me the land where the bright diamond sand			
Throws its light from the glittering stream,			
Where glideth along the graceful white swan			
Like a maid in a heavenly dream.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 3	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
Oh, give me the gale of the Solomon vale Where life streams with buoyancy flow, On the banks of the Beaver, where seldom if ever Any poisonous herbage doth grow.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 4	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
I love the wild flowers in this bright land of ours,			
I love, too, the wild curlew's scream,			
The bluffs and white rocks and antelope flocks			
That graze on the hillsides so green.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 5	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
How often at night when the heavens are bright			
By the light of the twinkling stars,			
Have I stood here amazed and asked as I gazed			
If their glory exceeds that of ours.			

Understanding “Home on the Range”

In each box, write down a word that you do not know. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the word. Look up the word in the dictionary to see if you are right.

Verse # 6	Words I don't know	I think this word means...	Dictionary definition
The air is so clear, the breeze so pure,			
The zephyrs so balmy and light,			
I would not exchange my home here to range			
Forever in azure so bright.			

Clues to the Setting: “Home on the Range”

Write down three to five phrases from the verses in “Home on the Range” that describe the setting of the song.

Verse #	Phrase	Meaning

Clues to the Setting: “Home on the Range”

Example

Write down three to five phrases from the verses in “Home on the Range” that describe the setting of the song.

Verse #	Phrase	Meaning
Chorus	Where the deer and the antelope play	A place where animals live
Chorus	The sky is not cloudy all day	A place with clear skies for most of the day

“Home on the Range”

Drawn by _____


